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# SOME SOCIAL REFORMS.

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## AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

SIR OLIVER LODGE, F.R.S.,

(Principal of the University of Birmingham),

*President of the Social and Political Education League,*

May 26th, 1905.

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LONDON:

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION LEAGUE.

MESSRS. THOMAS MURBY & Co., 3, Ludgate Circus Buildings, E.C.

Jan 5 1905

## SOME SOCIAL REFORMS.\*

I WELCOME the presence here of my predecessor in this Chair, Professor Percy Gardner, because his notable Address of last year serves in a manner as my text on the present occasion, and I am glad to be able to make acknowledgment to him of the appreciation which it roused in me while reading it the other day. With the greater part of it, and with the general tone, I found myself in cordial agreement, though there were contentions here and there, especially views concerning the nature and purport of scientific education, which I should prefer to express differently. To introduce them I will make a few statements or propositions, partly his, partly my own, showing essential agreement with his main position.

1. The necessary preliminary or precursor of wise and effectual reform is knowledge—knowledge both wide and accurate of the state of society and of the conditions of action: though at the same time we must

guard ourselves against a too narrow interpretation of the scientific study of history and bear ever in mind the great variety in human motives.

2. The problems before us are so complex and so strangely intermingled with surprising elements in human nature that it is easy for people with the best intentions to do harm rather than good, especially, as I myself think, if they proceed to attack an institution or an abuse in too direct and narrowly concentrated a manner. For instance:—

All attempts at dealing with the problems of poverty have hitherto failed, because they have not taken into account certain psychological facts, so that in many cases they have increased the evil they were meant to remedy. And it is thus in many other cases.

\* Address to The Social and Political Education League. Delivered on Friday, 26th May, 1905, in University College, London. By Sir Oliver Lodge, President for the Year.

3. Whatever may be the faults and foibles of a social expert in detecting abuses and advocating reforms, his aid is indispensable if the mere blind struggle for existence is to be suspended and progress to become conscious and moderately quick. As Charles Kingsley said, adopting words akin to some used by Huxley:—

For five and twenty years my ruling idea has been that the reconstruction of Society on a scientific basis is not only possible, but the only political object much worth striving for.

4. So to this end a long-continued and devoted study of the human problem, as a branch of science, is as necessary as is the intuitive and energetic zeal of the reformer. The art of government cannot continue to be the one department of activity for which no training is supposed to be necessary. We train doctors, we train engineers, we are beginning to train teachers; some day politicians must be trained too: that is to say, youths must be trained in social studies before becoming legislators; in spite of the fact that in all these professions some few men are born with such extraordinary ability that training seems almost superfluous in their favoured case. And as a preliminary to training, a body of systematised knowledge is necessary which must be the work of trained enquirers and social experts, such as are only now beginning to exist.

5. To grow real and practical and trustworthy experts may take a long time. As Professor Gardner says again:—

In human science, as in natural science, the mind of the learner must be gradually trained and taught to move in unfamiliar ways. It has to learn to distrust the obvious and to look beneath the surface, to value fact more than opinion and tendencies more than arguments. It has to acquire what Huxley called the "fanaticism of veracity." It must be prepared to give up the hope of reaching easy generalisations, and to plod contentedly through a mass of details.

6. Nevertheless there is no subject in which the result of study and research is likely to be more immediately useful and directly repaying. Most of our scientific applications result in indirect benefit; but in this human region of research the applications are direct and immediate to the advancement of life.

Discoveries in physics, electricity and the like, help mankind in certain outward ways, satisfy material needs. Discoveries in medicine may make life more free from pain. But discoveries in human nature may enable whole communities to live at a higher level, may have a bearing upon happiness direct and immediate. . . . And unless our increased power over nature tends in the long run to increase human happiness, it does not seem after all much to boast of. . . . It is a very great thing to be able to carry out one's will in the material world, but it is also important to have within purposes which are worth carrying out. If one has nothing to say worth saying, telegraph and telephone become only instruments of vanity.

7. Quite so, and therefore humanistic studies are of more emphatic interest to mankind than can be the study of inorganic Nature: though also, as he says again:—

It is a certain truth, that the humanistic side of education can only hold its own by means of a radical change of method and of outlook. . . .

If human studies are to hold their due place in education and in research, they must not adhere to the traditions of the Renaissance, they must adopt, so far as such are suitable, the methods of natural science. They must be made methodical and comprehensive.

So far I profess complete agreement: but now I want to ask, why discriminate and contrast human studies and nature studies in this way? Why assume that a study of nature results *only* in quicker travel and louder speech and more comfortable dwellings, while a study of history and literature results in a higher life and greater human happiness? That is to succumb to the popular conception of physical science, to assume that it is incompetent to serve as the vehicle of culture, and to confuse knowledge and insight with mere material applications.

The scoffer or Philistine on the other side might similarly urge, perhaps indeed has already often urged, that a study of ancient history results only in acquaintance with the details of the Punic wars, in familiarity with the barbaric exploits of half-civilised races, that it deals with the succession of monarchs over some Oriental tribe, and with the futile conventional subject of what man has done or failed to do in the past; while the study of natural science enables us to appreciate and think over again the eternal thoughts of the Creator.

One criticism or summary is as unfair as the other. The study of man and the study of nature ought not to be separated and discriminated in this superficial and biased way. I am very far indeed from applying these adjectives to Professor Gardner's utterances. On the contrary, I am elsewhere quoting and utilising those utterances for the purpose of influencing such educational authorities as in my judgment attribute an undue or unbalanced weight to the indirect benefits which humanity derives from bread-studies, studies which lead to greater wealth and better dwellings and higher manufacturing skill and the like: studies which contribute unselfishly to the general well-being of mankind, though at the sacrifice sometimes of the individual. These studies have been far too much neglected in this country, and it is well and necessary to emphasise them and place them on a recognised and proper footing; but it is well also to refrain from erring in the opposite direction by yielding too much to the present trend of

opinion, and allowing ourselves to attach too little weight to those studies which, though they can hardly be called selfish, yet are of direct benefit to the individual human soul itself—those which raise their possessor in the scale of existence and enrich his own life both now and hereafter; although perhaps they do not make him quite such a useful weapon or tool in the hands of the capitalist or exploiter, nor always, at least not when narrowly pursued, so valuable a servant of the State.

#### A WIDER SCOPE FOR EDUCATION.

It seems to me, therefore, that some eminent humanists at the present time discriminate too completely between the study of man and the study of nature. They say truly that scientific methods must be applied to both studies: that scientific methods, the scientific spirit of investigation, the best and noblest attributes of the pure investigator, are to be applied to the study of man as they have been applied to the study of Nature. They welcome the "fanaticism" of veracity which has always been a feature in the great students of Nature, and to-day is gaining ground in all branches of humanistic study, and is penetrating even Theology and Biblical criticism, to a surprising and most welcome extent. Nevertheless they are still apt to speak of the nineteenth century, and the scientific epoch through which we have lived and in which we are still living, as having chiefly provided for us telegraphs and railways and such like; or, taking a higher flight, they say truly that it has enlarged our conception of the Cosmos and familiarised us with its vast extent and intricacy, as well as with the conception of development and evolution. All this is true, and welcome; but the greatest benefit of scientific research lies in a region beyond even this. I wish to maintain that it has permeated and saturated the leaders of intellect in every department with a new spirit, and from one end to the other has made man perceive that honest enquiry is an avenue to truth, and that real and genuine truth is the worthy—the only worthy—object of intellectual apprehension; for that in truth, in its highest and sublimest sense, must ultimately be embedded wisdom and beauty and everything most worth having in existence.

I therefore urge that, except for trivial practical convenience, it is not necessary to discriminate. The essential truth that we have to learn and grow accustomed to is that man is a part of nature, the part of nature which has become self-conscious, the part that has acquired free will, that has become in many respects god-like and superb—devil-like also and degraded, some of it, as the necessary correlative—but a part of the Cosmos all the time, and the part of all parts most worthy of study.

But try to attend to that part alone, and you will fail. That is just the error that has through all the ages hitherto been made. The

study of man alone, divorced from the study of nature, is bound to be one-sided and partial and incomplete—it is bound to be more or less misleading. It is like the study of a fossil without a knowledge of the strata in which it was found; it is a study of an organism deprived of its environment. It is Tennyson's "flower in the crannied wall," plucked without its root and without its soil, without its atmosphere and moisture and sunshine, without the Cosmos of which it is a part—and then attempted to be understood. Man is a part of nature and is embedded in it; he is the child of an infinite and portentous material universe, and on one side of his personality is clearly akin to it; how can he study his own nature if he remain ignorant of all but the most superficial features of that Cosmos? The attempt has been made, the attempt is made still in the sixth form of nearly every school in the country, and in many a University; but it is an attempt which has failed, and the populace is realising that it has failed; and so it says—recoiling to the opposite extreme—let us abandon Letters and study Nature, let us make machines and combine chemicals and play with electricity and teach our sons mechanics and our daughters botany; let us abandon the effete study of Greek and philosophy and poetry and suchlike vanities, and attend to the solid business of life, metallurgy and mining and engineering and commerce and manufacture and political economy.

So swings, or is beginning to swing, the great pendulum of public opinion at the present time, in a natural reaction from an excess in one direction; though excess in either direction is as deleterious as excess in the other. It may swing a good deal yet without doing any harm; for the bias on one side, for all these centuries, has been so excessive that a great recoil was necessary and inevitable; it has not swung too far yet, nor in most schools has it swung nearly far enough; but I perceive already that unless a brake is applied it will swing too far some day, and that there will be a series of oscillations, and a somewhat bitter struggle, between the conservative remnant left behind, and the radical reformers rejoicing over a new order of things in what at present is the front.

Speaking as one who would fain, if he were wise enough, occupy a position at the middle of the swing, in the certainty that at this mid-point the pendulum will ultimately settle down, when its swings are done; speaking also as one who, like many others, would ascertain where that mean or mid-point actually is, I want to urge that my advocacy of science and scientific training is not really due to any wish to be able to travel faster or shout further round the earth, or to construct more extensive towns, or to consume more atmosphere and absorb more rivers, nor even to overcome disease, prolong human life, grow more corn, and cultivate to better advantage the kindly surface of the earth; though all these latter things will be "added unto us" if we persevere in high aims. But it is none of these things which should

be held out as the ultimate object and aim of humanity—the gain derivable from a genuine pursuit of truth of every kind; no, the ultimate aim can be expressed in many ways, but I claim that it is no less than to be able to comprehend what is the length and breadth and depth and height of this mighty universe, including man as part of it, and to know not man and nature alone, but to attain also some incipient comprehension of what saints speak of as the love of God which passeth knowledge, and so to begin an entrance into the fulness of an existence beside which the joy even of a perfect earthly life is but as the happiness of a summer's day.

These high gains are the fruit of a lifetime of study and thought, and are not to be appreciated in all moods; but, quite prosaically, it is manifest that by neglecting the study of nature and of mathematics and of the facts studied at present under the conventional head "science," we are neglecting one-half of our opportunities; no complete human being can emerge as the result of a one-sided training, and no wide comprehensive outlook on the universe can be taken by a being who has atrophied a portion of his faculties.

Thus, then, I hope that a real advance in general scientific education—whenever it is possible, and I do not say that it has been achieved or formulated or initiated as yet, for there are many opposing forces, and progress must be slow in order to be secure and wise—a real advance in scientific education will react with beneficent influence on humanistic education also; that the study of man, and of literature, and of art, and poetry, and music, will take an altogether higher and nobler shape; that there will be no conflict or hostility between humanism and realism, but that they will be found to be opposite sides, perhaps not even opposite sides, but mutually supporting buttresses and pilasters, architraves on which the roof of the cathedral of man's spirit can be laid, and the soul of man elevated far above the petty troubles and miserable sins which still cling to him by reason of his animal ancestry and only recent emergence into conscious though indistinct communion with the Divine.

#### EDUCATION OF THE AVERAGE MAN.

Now let us descend to details and enter upon the questions: How can the general level of mankind be raised? What steps are necessary to this end? and How far are we fundamentally falling short of the necessary efforts and proper methods now? Is it possible to reconstruct society on a scientific basis?

That ingenious and able writer, Mr. H. G. Wells, devotes himself seriously to these questions, and I believe it is generally admitted that he has provided this country with a good deal to think about.

The construction of a Utopia is an enticing, and I believe not an altogether unprofitable, exercise; because it is often a good practical

method of procedure to form an ideal, and then to see how near in practice it is possible to attain to it. That is the way of great inventors; it is, I believe, consciously and admittedly, the method which Lord Kelvin, for instance, has pursued in brooding over his inventions; and, being based in his case upon a deep knowledge of the problems and of possible methods of solution, it has resulted in many devices of the utmost originality.

So it may be with social problems also; but it is not my purpose to-day to attempt to rival Mr. Wells, nor to formulate nor even to discuss any Utopian scheme. I want to point out, what everyone is really aware of, how grievously in many respects we fail to organise lives in anything like a reasonably happy, healthy, human way, and then how it is possible almost at once to make a beginning in at least one or two directions, if we are minded so to do.

The late Professor Seeley insisted on knowledge as a necessary preliminary to reform; I agree, but in the exigency of life people cannot wait, as in the applications of Chemistry or Physics they can, for a fully-established and systematic theory before they take action; they must get what knowledge they can, they must encourage experts to devote their lives to serious study, and to accumulate and dissect and assimilate facts, but meanwhile they must themselves proceed tentatively and experimentally to put their ideas into practice, to bring them to the test of experience, to apply the methods of trial and error, to learn by mistakes, trying only to make those mistakes as few as possible, not hoping to avoid them altogether; and so must the practice and the theory, the acquisition of knowledge and its application go hand in hand and simultaneously; one cannot wholly precede the other, but each must react on the other amid the storm and stress of actual existence. The practical man and the theorist must live side by side, and both must be active; often, indeed, their attributes can be combined in one and the same person.

Moreover the knowledge of the expert is not the only knowledge at which we must aim. The education of the average citizen is to be considered. It is no use going too fast for him, no use being too far ahead of the time; anything achieved under those conditions is likely to be upset by the return swing of the pendulum.

Social progress is only sure and lasting when the average citizen is ripe for it, when he is carried along by the reformers and realises the benefit of what has been done. Society cannot be reconstructed from outside, it must be reconstructed from within, it must in a manner reconstruct itself, or it will be unstable. This is the whole problem, this is the real and noble difficulty in dealing with self-conscious material and free agents. They cannot with wisdom be coerced, they must be led; and this process takes time, and is the reason why progress is so slow. Machines can be managed on the coercion principle, but not men.

Looked at with seeing eyes this doctrine bears pressing very far; it can be applied even to Divine dealings with humanity, and accounts for the amount of sin and misery still existing in the world. Omnipotence itself could not with wisdom reform mankind faster than they desire to be reformed, nor can it permanently impose upon them conditions which they are incompetent to assimilate. A momentary outburst into intellectual splendour might be accomplished, as it was once in Athens, but it would be followed by centuries of falling back and comparative degradation.

But the time was never so ripe as it is now for the education of the average man. The hopelessness of effecting any permanent reform without his concurrence is the chief reason indeed which leads many of us to lay so great a stress upon education, upon real education and the reform of the schools, and upon reconsideration of the orthodox methods of imparting knowledge and stimulating thought and enquiry in use up till now.

#### IDEALS OF YOUTH.

If social problems and difficulties and reforms could be introduced to and contemplated by ingenious youth, before they became sophisticated by false traditions and imbued with selfish and pecuniary interests, much might be achieved. For it could then be realised how far from anything like an approach to perfection we now are, the true meaning of civilisation and social existence could be emphasised, and the desperately backward and uncivilised condition of our present state realised. It is a matter of common observation that young people have many of them a keen and generous appreciation of, and feel a yearning towards, a more ideal state of things; until they get dazed and bewildered and disheartened by the selfish conditions of life as it is, and fall back into the customary routine of conventional concurrence with the general trend of Society.

Take a few instances. What is the customary attitude to foreign politics on the part of our legislators? I do not wish to generalise unduly, but a cynic might say, with just sufficient truth to make us uncomfortable, that our foreign policy is to let things be, to refrain from studying questions and looking ahead, as long as people are quiet; and only to attend when they become a nuisance, especially when they threaten, or seem to threaten, our pecuniary interests. Then, to act in a sudden, spasmodic, excited manner, and enter upon operations which are very costly before they are completed.

Such assertion might be made by a cynical observer; but he would have to admit a few brilliant exceptions, due to our leaders, exceptions which I gladly and gratefully acknowledge. The Anglo-French *entente* is one of them; the Japanese Alliance is conspicuously another; certain honourable dealings with America are a third; and our behaviour in Egypt, both in war and peace, is a fourth. There may

be others; and what I wish to point out is that whenever our Statesmen and leaders do thus look ahead and achieve something in a peaceful and progressive and meritorious direction, the populace appreciate it; the people are ready for this mode of dealing with foreign affairs, they are generous and hopeful, and willing to sacrifice something for the good of the world; they are indeed usually more unselfish and more "Christian," if I may use that expression, than our rulers and financiers have imagined them or always proved themselves to be.

Hence, on the principle that the average man must be carried with us if progress is to be permanent, I say that the conditions are hopeful.

I am one of those who are beginning to contemplate the possibility of a national or citizen army, each one in his youth devoting a certain time to the acquisition of drill and discipline and the use of weapons for national defence. I believe it will make for peace, inasmuch as it will bring home the danger and responsibility of war to every hearth in the kingdom; for a people whose ordinary avocations are upset by active service will not rush into it as rashly as do a people who maintain a professional fighting class, whose career and opportunities for distinction are essentially involved in the occurrence of hostilities.

Through the half century of my own life we have fought certain wars which to the best of my judgment we should not have fought. The Crimea was the first of them; few now think that we should have fought the Russians at the behest of Louis Napoleon for the purpose of maintaining the domination of an Asiatic race over a controversial portion of Europe in order to close the natural maritime outlet of a great nation. And the last instance is very recent. I know that there is always something to be said on both sides. I trust that the verdict of history may be on our side, but I much fear it will go against us in several cases. Yet these wars have retarded the growth of civilisation and entailed terrible suffering—a depressing thought, if no adequate good has come of it all.

On the other hand I believe that we should have put down our foot strongly, and been ready to fight, if need be, in protection of certain maltreated people whose existence we had contracted to maintain. A nation which rushes into battle for selfish causes only, and which refrains, and is known to be certain to refrain, from the expense and trouble of contest for any unselfish or noble cause or in protection of the weak, does not, any more than an individual, earn the respect of the world; nor does it really strengthen its position, not even its sublimary position, among the nations. "There is that scattereth and 'yet increaseth' in this sphere also, and 'prestige' is an asset not to be acquired on the grounds of financial and territorial considerations alone. If our devotion to material gain is too concentrated and strenuous we run the risk of losing even that. Let the British Empire



uphold the right and the truth, and it may hope and deserve to be prosperous and perpetual; let it exhibit itself to the world in purely selfish guise, and decadence will assuredly set in.

I am convinced that young people will realise this: I feel assured that greed and sophistication are acquired characters, and fortunately that they are not transmitted to offspring by inheritance, though by example and precept they may be and are gradually instilled.

#### CONTROL AND ALTERATION OF ENVIRONMENT.

Well, then, take the condition of Society at home. The people for the most part, in Britain, are now aggregated into great cities and towns, and the country is becoming depopulated. Are the cities admirable and attractive places, and are the conditions of existence in town and country such as they might readily be made, with our present knowledge of, and control over, natural forces?

We must answer with conviction, assuredly no!

The towns are subject to a blight of squalor and poverty and dirt: the West-End may live in forgetfulness of them, but the slums of a town cover a great area, and they are hideously depressing. To think of people living there, year in year out and all their lives, is unspeakably repellent. We who get away, for travel and holidays and change, do not realise all that it must mean towards the dwarfing and degradation of the human soul. The fact that good and decent and exemplary lives are lived in these dismal surroundings is again a most hopeful feature and speaks well for humanity. It proves itself superior to its environment, it dominates its surroundings, and blossoms as we see a flowering shrub sometimes blossoming among material ruin and decay.

And what we have to teach, throughout, is that in no sort of way is man to be the slave of his environment. No longer is he to adapt himself to surrounding circumstances, changing colour with them as do the insects and plants. It is not himself which is to suit the environment, but he is to make the environment suit him. This is the one irrefragable doctrine that must be hammered into the ears of this generation till they realise its truth and accept it. The struggle for existence, supplemented by other great facts and laws, some of them partially known, some quite unknown, has brought us to what we are. It has done its slow and painful and beneficent work. All through the ages of the world's history the blind and inevitable facts or forces—struggle for existence and survival of the fittest—have been operating, so as to *clinck* as it were and perpetuate every favourable variation, which, either by accident or by design, has arisen; and thus has animal nature been confirmed and strengthened and improved, until it has risen to the altitude of conscious and controlling man.

There, however, the function of these blind forces begins to cease. Man progresses now, not by exterminating the weak, but by caring for them; not by wars and fierce competition, but by the unobtrusive pursuits of peace, and by the development of families and firms and communities organised for mutual help and co-operation; and this element of higher progress—already foreshadowed as it was in the animal kingdom—we have now consciously to recognise and intensify, till we land at length in the friendly co-operation and brotherhood of the whole human race.

It is not human nature that must be altered to suit circumstances, nor need it be adapted to material surroundings; it must be obedient to the laws of nature certainly, but within their sway we have entered on the period of conscious evolution, and have begun the adaptation of environment to organism. It is thus that all progress in the rearing of domestic animals has been accomplished. The Procrustean system of unaided nature is over; and under the fostering care of man results are achieved which else would have been impossible. Hitherto man has applied processes associated with care and culture to the quadrupeds and to the birds, he has not yet applied it to the fish of the sea, nor has he altogether learnt how to apply it to his own species. A beginning of intelligent treatment of humanity has been made, but for the most part men are still left to struggle up against adverse circumstances as best they may, and the weakest still go to the wall. There are some who indulge in the enervating and dangerous fallacy that this is the best way, that a policy of masterly inactivity and *laissez faire* is best for the race, and that any interference will result in weakness and decadence.

There may be some here present who think so: for the fallacy still exists among thoughtful men. Nevertheless I wish to maintain that it is a deadly fallacy, and that our constant endeavour should be to continue the process of extermination of this fallacy begun by Professor Huxley in his famous Oxford "Romanes Lecture." The surface of the earth is to be amended by us, the forces of nature are to be first understood and then curbed, controlled and utilised. Higher aims are to replace mere survival in a struggle for subsistence. We have entered on the epoch of conscious control, and must assume our full dignity as man. As Mr. Huxley said, in "Evolution and Ethics":—

"Social progress means a checking of the cosmic process at every step, and the substitution for it of another, which may be called the 'ethical process.' . . . It is from neglect of these plain considerations 'that the fanatical individualism of our time attempts to apply the 'analogy of cosmic nature to society. . . . Let us understand, once 'for all, that the ethical progress of Society depends, not on imitating 'the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating 'it.'—Pp. 81-83.

"The most highly civilised societies have substantially reached [a position where] the struggle for existence can play no important part within them."—P. 36.

#### IDEALS FOR TOWN AND COUNTRY.

And now a word as to method.

The first thing to learn is that evils are often not to be attacked too directly, that the most obvious and direct way is seldom the wisest or the most effective; the wisest policy is often indirect.

When a gardener sees his flowers droop and wither, when he sees the fruit decay or remain sour and shrivelled, he does not always attend to the blooms alone, nor even to the buds and blossoms; he goes deeper than that, he surmises that there is some canker at the root, and he searches for the parasite that is poisoning or draining the life blood from the tree; or he makes laboratory experiments in vegetable pathology, of a character apparently quite wide of the mark.

So I advocate we should deal with such evils as the dirt, disease and drunkenness of our towns, with the perennial problem of the unemployed, and with all the manifold evils which still cling like a canker to our wealth and civilisation. We should treat these evils as we treat diseases and cankers affecting the fruit, and should seek for the causes deeply and pertinaciously, with the object of removing them by indirect and permanent means.

First of all we must bring home the evil to people, otherwise they get so accustomed to it that they begin to think that it is the normal and necessary condition of Society. They even quote biblical authority for it, saying, "The poor ye have always with you,"—as if that meant that the grime and wretchedness of city slums were to be always with us (although they do not exist in such countries as Sweden and Tyrol); whereas its real meaning is that poor people requiring help and assistance, people bowed down by trouble and sickness and accident and sorrow, people who require the kindly aid of the good Samaritan, the healing influence of ointment,—these we shall have always with us; and no era would be an era of prosperity from which the sympathy and help of man to man should be a thing of the past; the community of human nature, and dependence upon mutual aid, will be eternal. But to maintain that the grimy and soul-destroying wretchedness of human outcasts, that death by starvation, and the transmission of disease by ignorance and dirt and sin,—to maintain that these are permanently decreed Divine ordinances, otherwise than as the necessary outcome of neglect and mismanagement, is essential blasphemy.

To realise what a city ought to be—might be if we thought it worth while to set the ideal before us and strive to reach it—we can contem-

plate the visions of painters and poets. These are the seers of humanity, and their visions are only the precursors of what it is for us after laborious generations to make real and actual. To think that the ideal is impossible is to show a lack of faith; it cannot be achieved quickly, but if each generation will endeavour to contribute its quota to the common amelioration, something like a millennium may arrive before people at present think it at all likely. Nature will co-operate with us; we have only to learn her ways and to set ourselves to work in accordance with natural laws and not against them, and we shall find the task easier than we think. Here is a picture of city life as seen by Burne-Jones, in the form of a design for one of two pictures inspired by Rossetti's poem "The Blessed Damosel"—it must not be pressed prosaically into detail, it is a dream city, but it is more inspiring than a smoky slum:—

"In the first picture I shall make a man walking in the street of a great city, full of all kinds of happy life; children . . . and lovers walking, and ladies leaning from windows all down great lengths of street leading to the city walls; and there the gates are wide open, letting in a space of green field and cornfield in harvest; and all round his head a great rain of swirling autumn leaves blowing from a little walled graveyard."—*Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, vol. I, p. 153.

There is nothing far-fetched or impossible about it. Nature will do her part readily enough towards this picture. It is man's selfish and misguided aims that are at fault, not the nature of things.

And then as to country life, at present it is said to be dull and depressing and monotonous; it need not be so. The utilisation of leisure is a vitally important feature, far too much neglected hitherto. I commend the efforts of the "Social Institutes' Union" to your notice. I am convinced that the provision of opportunities for wise utilisation of leisure will be a great means of improvement, the greatest opponent of the mere drinking den. Education is doing much for life in towns, it will do much also to make life interesting in the country. In summer it can hardly fail to be stimulating; and in winter no village need be without its electric light, its recreation room, its library, and even its laboratory, in which winter study may be pursued by the more studious, and much information gained for application to actual husbandry, or to fill the vacant hours of manual labour with worthy thoughts, when the season of long days comes round. A developed system of agriculture is full of interest, but it has been shamefully neglected, until almost the last and dismallest use to which land can be put in some places is the growth of crops—the growth of that food on which the whole livelihood of the people necessarily depends.

## CONDITIONS OF LAND-OWNERSHIP.

The salvation and restoration of land to its right use is a great difficulty. Why do these difficulties exist? What is the root cause of our present disabilities? It is for experts to say, not for me. But in so far as I have been able to form any tentative and provisional opinion I cannot help thinking that the custom of allowing absolute ownership of land to individuals, instead of to communities, is responsible for a good deal. To me it is somewhat surprising that it is quite legal and ordinary for a person to be able to sell a portion of England for his own behoof. It does not seem to me reasonable, in any high sense, that a bit of the Country itself should belong absolutely to some individual, so that he has the right to cut down trees on it, to dig up the minerals in it, to sell either it or its coal, to lay it waste and desolate as a deer forest, or a cinder-heap, if it so pleases him, and to levy a heavy tax on building enterprise; to do, in fact, what he likes with his own, and live elsewhere on the proceeds in idleness and luxury.

I do not say that landowners actually do this, but it is legal for them to do it. That is the system under which we have grown up, and are absurdly accustomed to; and that individuals refrain from exercising their full rights, that they recognise duties and responsibilities and devote themselves to such schemes of betterment as may commend themselves to their intelligence, is all to the good as far as it goes; but I do not think that matters of such vital importance should be left to the caprice of an individual, nor that any abuse of his rights should be permissible.

If ownership of land is permitted by law, the owner should be a trustee, not a parasite. Whether there be any parasites now, merely draining the fruits of the labour of others and claiming a butterfly existence for themselves and their successors, I do not presume to say, but I conjecture that there are some, though I hope few.

## INHERITANCE.

Then, looking at Society as an outsider, it has long appeared to me that there is another matter that may have to be considered some day—viz., the law of inheritance; whereby a person can acquire a competence and live luxuriously without necessarily doing a stroke of work of any kind all his life. It is not an easy problem, how to regulate inheritance, indeed it is a supremely difficult one; but the idea that life is intolerable without some inherited background or cushion of property, the idea that people may live without working and yet without disgrace, is responsible for much incompetence and some misery. It is good neither for the youth brought up in that idea, nor for those whose labour has to supply him with what he demands: it acts badly all round; and even though the looked-for competence is small, it has

contributed to the ruin of sons or nephews, in cases known to most of us.

But it will be said, would you have no men of leisure? On the contrary, I would have no men without leisure. Leisure—time at our own disposal, time to live and do something worth doing, wholly for its own sake—is the most valuable asset in life. All should have leisure, but then also all should work. No one should be idle, completely idle, save on pain of starvation or the disciplinary drill of prison.

But then the term "work" should be interpreted wisely and liberally, it would be no kindness, no improvement, and perfect folly, to insist that everyone should make things with his hands. The world would be cluttered up with useless products: man does not live by bread and furniture and material implements alone, nor even by pictures and statues and works of art alone. The poet, the musician, the artist, the author, the explorer, the student, the thinker, the statesman—all these are workers; and a country, even our country, is not so deadly poor but that it can afford to support people engaged in these and many other superficially unsubstantial occupations. The preposterous error of the French Democracy in executing Lavoisier, because "the Republic had no need of chemists," is hardly likely to be repeated; if it were, then to any such short-sighted folly as that the present conditions of competition and endowed idleness are infinitely to be preferred; because among the people so provided for a genius or a saint, of the utmost importance to the race, may here and there arise. The community should have the sense to maintain people of every worthy kind; and if it can be shown that the present indirect plan of doing so is the best and most appropriate, well and good. I do not deny it: I only say that it is a question that demands thought and consideration and cannot be answered offhand.

But that being so, and reform being surrounded with difficulties, what is there that can be tackled at once? What reforms are possible when everything is so complicated, and when everybody is free to think as he pleases and within limits to do what he thinks right?

Is there any class on which the hand of reform may at once be laid?

## CLASSES READY AND WAITING FOR REFORM.

I say there are two such classes.

There are the people whom Society has for its own protection deprived of their freedom, and, by actual manual force, taken under its own control; and there are the people who for the sake of bare subsistence have voluntarily surrendered their individual freedom for a time. In other words, there are the criminals and there are the paupers. These classes are subject to drill and discipline, and upon them experiments in improvement and organisation can be tried.

Now I contend that hitherto, in these two directions, Society has by

no means yet risen to a sense of its power and its responsibility. It is too deeply imbued with the idea of punishment, too faithless about efforts towards reformation and improvement.

I ask for a serious study of these two great classes, and some perception of the splendid opportunity for direct treatment which they afford.

#### TREATMENT OF PAUPERS.

So far as it is permissible for me to have an opinion, I suggest that we should do well to remove the stigma of disgrace and deterrence attaching to the poor-house, and regard it as a place not only for maintaining the impotent and aged in fair comfort, as at present, but also for dealing efficiently with the able-bodied of weak character; and so try to convert it into an instrument of instruction and discipline and organisation for those mental and moral invalids who are unable or unwilling to organise their own lives. Competent people, who can organise themselves, will stay outside; incompetent people, who cannot organise themselves, who are deficient in energy and in will power, will drift inside,—inside the working of the system I mean, not necessarily inside a building,—to take advantage of the organising power of Society; just as workmen enter a factory to take advantage of the organising and administrative ability of its head.

Very well, by so drifting under the organisation and discipline exercised by a community, they acknowledge, or are supposed to acknowledge, failure of a sort; and the same sort of disgrace attaches to them as attaches to a man who fails in business—no more and no less. It may be their own fault, it may be the fault of their parents, it may be the fault of social conditions; it is a fruitless quest to seek judicially and seriously to administer praise or blame. The medical profession is wise; it does not seek to blame, it seeks to cure its patients. These are the patients of Society; in their present state they are useless, and they are very likely deserving of blame. Any way they have failed, and they require help.

What sort of help? Not material help alone, though that doubtless in the first instance, but intellectual and moral help chiefly. They must be shown how to live, how to work, how to develop their faculties. They must be content to be treated in some respects as children, helpless and sad but not yet rebellious children, for whom life has been too hard. To put them to a hopeless task, like oakum-picking or breaking stones, is to disgust them with labour; to give them things like this to do, for which a machine is the proper agent, if it is ever now done, this treatment is not only folly, it is wickedness. I solemnly believe that it is wickedness; and if in this I am mistaken, I trust that experts—not conventional ones accustomed and inured to the system and incapable of original thought, but real experts—will point out my error.

We should not try to degrade men, however low they may have sunk; when they come to our house of refuge, our establishment for the relief of the poor, we should seek to raise them, to put heart into them, to treat them kindly and as human beings. Guardians doubtless often endeavour to do this and to administer the law in a kindly spirit, but it is not in accordance with the system: the system aims at exclusion of what are called "the undeserving" by harshness applied all round. Why should Society set upon weak people and try to crush them into hopelessness and rebellion? That is not the object for which we pay poor rates. At present the poor rate is rather a mockery: it does not help people till they are quite down and destitute, and then it tries to degrade them. Gentlemen, we ought not to stand this; the time has come for reconsideration and reform. If we could but feel assured that our contributions went to making happier and healthier and more hopeful the poor folk who either by defective character or defective education or rough street influences or deficient industry, have drifted into a condition of idleness as bad and useless as that of some specimens of our loafing gilded youth—if we could feel that our Poor-law contributions would result in their being helped, disciplined, and encouraged to get their foot once more on the ladder which they have slipped off, so as to earn enough—the very small pittance needed—to keep them from starvation until hope and humanity began once more to dawn in their spirits, if they could be shown a way of escape from the down-grade on which they are drifting, then each of us would gladly pay the rate demanded.

Moreover, it would be a profitable investment for Society. By placing the people on land, on unreclaimed or unfertile land calling out for labour, under skilled supervision, they might, I believe, be made self-supporting before long;\* but even failing that, some of them could be rescued from the slough of despond into which they have fallen, and prevented from drifting into that most expensive of all classes—more expensive to maintain than even the landed gentry and far less picturesque—the criminal class.

#### TREATMENT OF CRIMINALS.

Whatever may be the case with paupers, concerning the criminal class I am perfectly certain we are doing wrong. We are seeking to punish, not to educate, stimulate, reform. Punishment is not our function. We think it is, but it is not. It comes in incidentally, in accordance with the laws of nature, but it should not be our primary aim. We have a right to protect ourselves, but we have no right to break a man's spirit and undermine his intelligence and character.

\* It may be suggested that there is scope for the uncompetitive organisation of abundance of cheap labour in works adapted to resist the wastage of English land by encroachment of the sea.

Solitary confinement does that. Hopeless idleness and degradation does that.

We behave as if we assumed that criminals are already so low and degraded that nothing we can do to them will damage them further. We do not really assume anything of the kind. We know that such an idea is false; but Society prefers not to contemplate the conditions of prison life, and leaves the painful subject alone. The government of gaols is a convenient form of pension for Officers retired from active service; and a severe military form of discipline, we appear to hope, may be the right sort of thing. Very well, then, I think it is not; I ask for reconsideration of the question, and I believe that it will be found that, however *penally* successful it may be, it is a thoroughly bad and incompetent system of administration from the point of view of any good outcome or profitable result.

Prisoners should be put under industrial conditions, and should be organised into useful members of Society. Remember they are not the incompetent weaklings of the casual ward: some of them are men of ability, some have succumbed to temptation, some of them have been born and bred as criminals, as to a profession, and have never had a fair chance. Some doubtless are brutal and hopeless, but these are the exceptions; these should be treated medically and psychologically, like other interesting abnormalities: the whole system should not be organised on their behalf. Criminals should be made gradually self-supporting, their labour should be useful; and self-respect—the natural outcome of self-support—should be encouraged. Unless they are reformed they should not be set free. So far I am in agreement with Sir Robert Anderson, with whose views in general, religious as well as social, I find myself usually in profound disagreement. It is stupid to release them in order knowingly to reinforce the ranks of the criminal classes. Prisons should be reformatories, and sentences might be indefinite and contingent on reform. But, in order to be effective reformatories, they must be humanely and wisely administered; it is a most difficult task, demanding earnest and self-sacrificing and constant attention; and the present system should be radically overhauled. It is not so much emendation as revolution of the present system that is needed; and if any trade-unions, or other corporate bodies of workmen, object to the utilisation of prison labour and the production of useful commodities even for internal consumption, then it should be made clear to those trade-unions or other bodies that the object of prison discipline is not primarily the manufacture of goods, but the reform and manufacture of human beings from the refuse of humanity—a kind of “shoddy” eminently worthy of this Divine Factory, the Earth; they must be taught that so long as a man retains a spark of humanity, and so long as Society takes away his liberty and makes itself responsible for his future, no consideration of trumpery material, no question of immediate apparent

profit or loss, should prevent every effort to turn him out a respectable and worthy citizen. Nor do I believe that the trade-union leaders would object to this, if it were properly presented to them, any more than they object to evening technical rate-aided schools, municipal educational institutions, and other machinery for swelling the ranks of the competent and the trained and the respected artisan. Workmen leaders have not shown themselves selfish nor foolish when properly informed. Sometimes they lack information, and then they naturally take a wrong view; but even selfishly, opposition would be unwise. The people have to be maintained; surely something should be got out of them, they should not be maintained in idleness. Enforced idleness may be a cruel punishment, but it is an expensive one to apply.

However, workmen have never taken a selfish view of a social question yet, when it was properly placed before them. I hope that any initial opposition they may feel will disappear when they realise:—

(1) That the test to be applied to every social institution and to every social scheme, the way to see whether an alteration is really useful and valuable or not, is to consider what is the ultimate end and aim of existence, what is the ultimate product for which activity and labour and enterprise are worthily expended: then they will perceive that the answer must be,—humanity, life, fulness of existence, high and noble manhood; there is no product which excels that in value; the manufacture of all else must be subordinate to the manufacture of that.

That is the first proposition which they should realise; and the second is:—

(2) That the great social organisations called workhouses and gaols might be manufactories of human beings, hospitals, as it were, for the ill and warpings, not of body but of mind and character, receptacles for refuse and converters of it into manhood and womanhood. Let them realise even the possibility of such a change, and they will welcome any arrangements which could bring about this much-needed reform.

Again it must be held that direct agencies—Prisoners' Aid Societies, and the like—are but palliatives, temporarily necessary no doubt, but quite incompetent to deal with the root of the evil. There is not time to deal with people when they come out of prison, broken and disgraced: it is too late then; no, it is all the time, the months or years, that they are in prison, that furnishes the opportunity for getting at them and putting them through such a course of study, discipline and wholesome and interesting work, as shall fit them to take their place in the army of citizens when they emerge.

To say that the army of workers is already overstocked is no answer: if it were, it is equivalent to throwing up the sponge and admitting that this planet cannot support its present population. It

is absurd to suppose that; when as yet science has not been to any large extent applied to agriculture, when scientific organisation and material have never yet been seriously applied to human problems, when the bulk of people even of good position are seriously under-educated, when we are only emerging from the region of individual competition and *laissez-faire*, only just escaping from the time when legislation was governed by class-interest, and when the populace, though nominally free, were really serfs, and when, as some urge it should be even now, the whip of starvation was held over them lest they should fail to do their quota of work to maintain those above them in leisured ease.

Time enough to acknowledge defeat and take refuge in despair when a few centuries of really intelligent study and unselfish legislation have been tried.

A beginning of the new state of things is being made. Municipal and socialistic enterprises are in the air. They are running the gauntlet of criticism and suspicion, as all good things have to do, before they are purged of their dross; undoubtedly they must justify themselves, and by admirable management must make good their claim to be the beginning of better things; but this I will say, that never was the outlook so hopeful. Never were all classes so permeated by the spirit, not the phrases but the essential spirit, of brotherhood and co-operation, never was there such universal recognition of the beauty of the spirit of real and vital Christianity, far above the differences and dogmas of the sects.

With the extension of local self-government, call it devolution or what you will, legislative progress may be more rapid: the best men will throw themselves into public service with more heart and energy than now, when in an overloaded and centralised assembly progress is so slow and the machinery so old and cumbersome that the output is quite incomparable with the time and labour involved in getting it through.

OLIVER LODGE.



END OF  
TITLE